

Remarks of Cathy Delahanty
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Greenwich Public Schools

Before the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon, Representative Fleishmann, Senator Stillman, and members of the Education committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Cathy Delehanty and I am the president of the Greenwich Education Association, representing 875 teachers in lower Fairfield County.

I'm speaking today to urge you to reject Senate Bill 24, which tries to do too much too quickly. While there are some ideas of merit here which may warrant more discussion, I believe the various sections should be broken down into separate bills so that the existing research on each section can be adequately debated before any packages are quickly rushed into law.

I first want to speak about linking teacher certification to employment. Since the Education Enhancement Act of 1989, CT teachers have had strict requirements for entry into the profession. CT teaching candidates have completed required coursework, including student teaching, passing Praxis tests, completing portfolios and now modules, only to get to the initial certificate.

The district then has the responsibility to evaluate non tenured teachers to determine whether a contract renewal is to be offered each of the four non tenured years. When used properly, this system works well, especially as a teacher who may not meet the expectations in one district can certainly go try to be a successful probationary employee in another district.

Educators in Greenwich have worked hard to revamp and improve our evaluation system over the past 5 years. We know how much teacher and administrator effort it takes to implement a fair and successful plan. If a teacher is unsuccessful, we typically counsel them out of the district. It is unfair to base licensure on the skills of a single evaluator, as stated in this bill.

The second aspect I want to speak to is linking evaluation to the salary structure as mentioned in the bill, specifically the elimination of salary lanes for degrees or credits and years of service. There is no educational research to support that this structure has positive effects. In fact, the Peabody School at Vanderbilt University, which was set up specifically to prove merit pay works, keeps finding evidence to the contrary. Salary structures are the responsibility and purview of local districts, not the state. Many districts, including Greenwich, have provisions for recognizing teacher productivity or withholding salary increases based on performance. There is also a great concern about the training and skills of evaluators; there is no guarantee

that a teacher in one building will be rated by someone with the same level of expertise as their peers in other buildings.

Finally, I urge you to continue to take the CEA's "A View from the Classroom" reform package seriously. We need to allow the teachers, the ones who are in front of *your* children, to make the most important decisions about success and improved achievement. You will see just how valuable they are to this profession.

Thank you.